Government of Yukon

Yukon Government NEWS Release

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Government Announces New Rules for this Year's Bison Hunt

WHITEHORSE - The Yukon government has authorized an initial harvest of 200 wood bison for this winter as part of a new adaptive management approach which is consistent with the population level prescribed by the Bison Management Plan, Environment Minister Elaine Taylor announced today.

The new process, developed in consultation with the Yukon Wood Bison Technical Team, comprising of the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, affected Renewable Resources Councils and First Nations, means there will not be a permit draw this year and hunters who successfully harvested a bison in the last five years will also be able to hunt this winter.

The Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board recommended that the government adopt the approach on a five-year trial basis following a public review of the proposal and noted that the majority of the public were in favour of the proposed regulation change.

This winter's bison hunt season will run from December 1, 2008 to February 28, 2009. If necessary, a registration hunt will be put in place for March to limit the number of hunters who might be in the field at any given time.

Bison hunt permits will be available to any eligible Yukon resident hunters who have completed

the mandatory bison hunt workshop. Hunters must complete the course before they can obtain a permit and bison seal.

All hunters will be required to report their successful hunt within 72 hours of the kill. The hunt will be declared closed once the harvest limit has been reached.

All other Wildlife Act regulations will apply - biological submission, game management subzones, rifle type and caliber, seal fees, and the limit of one permit and one bison per licensed hunter. This information is set out in detail in the Hunting Regulations Summary 2008 09 booklet available at Environment Yukon offices and on the Environment Yukon website.

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A backgrounder is attached.

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Backgrounder
Wood Bison Permit Hunt 2008

Wood bison were re-introduced to Yukon in the 1980s as part of a national recovery effort for a threatened species.

While the Wood Bison Management Plan calls for the Yukon population to be maintained at 500 bison, a limited annual permit hunt since 1998 has been unable to keep bison numbers to that level. A survey in 2007 estimated the area population at about 1,100 bison.

In 2007, Environment Yukon recommended that an adaptive management framework be instituted to give the Minister increased flexibility to make decisions annually with respect to season dates, permit numbers, and open subzones for hunting bison.

These decisions would be made in consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, affected Renewable Resources Councils and First Nations, and advice sought from the Yukon Wood Bison Technical Team.

The Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board recommended that the adaptive management be carried out on a five-year trial basis. This approach has been adopted into regulation and this season (2008-09) is the first to use it.

The Wood Bison Technical Team proposed a harvest management approach for 2008-09, which was subsequently approved by the Wood Bison Management Team. The changes hunters will see this season are:

- An initial annual allowable harvest (AAH) of 200 bison

- Initial season December 1, 2008 to February 28, 2009

- Hunters will still require a permit, but permits will not be limited for the initial season, i.e. no random draw for hunters.

- Hunters must complete the mandatory bison hunt workshop before they can obtain a permit and a bison seal. A list is kept of all people who have successfully completed the workshop.

- Hunters will be required to buy the seal when they pick up their permit. The cost is $50 plus GST.

- Hunters will be required, as a condition of the permit, to report a successful hunt within 72 hours of the kill.

- All other Wildlife Act regulations will apply: providing biological submissions, game management subzones, rifle type and caliber, tag fees, and limit of one permit and one bison per licensed hunter.

- The harvest levels will be reviewed by the end of February to determine if an in-season adjustment can be made to the allowable harvest.

- A second season commencing March 1, 2009 and ending March 31, 2009 will be introduced with the harvesting managed through a registration hunt that would limit the number of hunters at any given time.

- School hunts would continue to be held.